

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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SUBJECT: NEW CHIEF MINISTERS IN RAJASTHAN AND
UTTAR PRADESH

1. RAJASTHAN

1. FORMER RAJASTHAN HOME MINISTER HARIDEO JOSHI WAS SWORN IN AS CHIEF MINISTER OF RAJASTHAN ON OCTOBER 25, ENDING A PERIOD OF FRANTIC MANEUVERING BETWEEN JAIPUR AND NEW DELHI WHICH BEGAN WHEN CHIEF MINISTER BARKATULLAH KHAN DIED SUDDENLY ON OCTOBER 11. JOSHI TOOK OVER FROM KHAN AS ACTING CHIEF MINISTER AND HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE BRAHMIN AND THE RAJPUTS IN HIS BID FOR THE JOB. JOSHI WAS A LONG TIME ASSOCIATE OF THE FORMER RAJASTHAN BOSS M. L. SUKHADIA AND HIS BID FOR CM WAS SEEN BY SOME AS RETURN OF THE OLD CORRUPT POWERS HOLDERS IN THE STATE. HIS MAIN OPPONENT WAS UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS, RAM NIWAS MIRDHA, WHO WAS KNOWN TO BE marginally FAVORED BY MRS. GAHDNI AND CONGRESS PARTY LEADERS. HIS LOCAL SUPPORTERS WERE THE JATS. HARIJANS, TRIBAL PEOPLE, AND MOSLEMS WERE DIVIDED AS TO WHO THEY WANTED. BOTH JOSHI AND MIRDHA WERE

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KNOWN TO BE PERSONALLY LOYAL TO MRS. GANDHI, SO THAT CONGRESS

PARTY LEADERS WERE IN A DILEMMA. MRS. CHANDRASEKHAR, WHO HAS EMERGED AS A CONGRESS PARTY TROUBLESHOOTER, WAS SENT TO JAIPUR TO SOUND OUT LOCAL OPINION, AND REPORTED THAT JOSHI HAD THE EDGE. TO AVOID PROLONGED CONTROVERSY AND INCREASED CASTE TENSION, A COMPROMISE WAS THEN WORKED OUT BY WHICH MIRDHA WAS TO BE GIVEN THE DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER POSITION. FOREIGN MINISTER SWARAN SINGH CARRIED THIS WORD TO JAIPUR WHEN HE WENT AS THE CONGRESS PARTY OBSERVER, AND MIRDHA DULY WITHDREW HIS CANDIDACY AS LEADER OF THE RAJASTHAN CONGRESS LEGISLATURE PARTY AND THEREBY HIS CHIEF MINISTER CANDIDACY AS WELL. THE COMPROMISE IS A SHAKY ONE, BECAUSE BOTH MEN CONTINUE TO BE RIVALS FOR REGIONAL AS WELL AS NATIONAL POLITICAL INFLUENCE. MIRDHA HAS NOT RESIGNED HIS CENTRAL GOVERNMENT POSITION AND HAS YET TO FORMALLY ACCEPT THE DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OFFER. ALTHOUGH SOME OBSERVERS SAW THE DECISION AS A VICTORY FOR REGIONALISM AND A MINOR DEFEAT FOR MRS. GANDHI, JOSHI INSISTED THAT HIS SELECTION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE IF MRS. GANDHI HAD WANTED SOMEONE ELSE.

2. UTTAR PRADESH

ON NOV. 8 FORMER UNION MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS NANDAN BAHUGUNA WAS SWORN IN AS CHIEF MINISTER OF UTTAR PRADESH, REPLACING KAMALPATI TRIPATHI WHO RESIGNED JUNE 13 AND ENDING THE FIVE-MONTH INTERVAL OF PRESIDENT'S RULE. AS LATE AS THE FIRST DAYS OF NOVEMBER IT APPEARED THAT TRIPATHI MIGHT BE REINSTATED AS CHIEF MINISTER ON THE GROUNDS THAT HIS LONG EXPERIENCE (AND INFLUENCE) IN UTTAR PRADESH WAS NEEDED TO HELP MRS. GANDHI ORGANIZE SUPPORT BEFORE THE GENERAL ELECTION SCHEDULED FOR NEXT SPRING. ON THE OTHER HAND, TRIPATHI IS 68 YEARS OLD AND HAD BEEN REMOVED AS CHIEF MINISTER BECAUSE THE JUNE REVOLT OF THE PROVINCIAL ARMED CONSTABULARY INDICATED THAT HE WAS NOT IN FIRM CONTROL OF UTTAR PRADESH, THE LARGEST STATE IN INDIA AND MRS. GANDHI'S HOME BASE. AS IN RAJASTHAN, BOTH CANDIDATES SUPPORTED MRS. GANDHI ALTHOUGH SHE APPEARS TO HAVE SOME MISGIVINGS ABOUT BAHUGUNA. FOR A TIME IT APPEARED HOME MINISTER UMAR SHANKER DIKSHIT WOULD BE SELECTED AS A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE. IN THE END SHE DECIDED ON THE 54-YEAR OLD BAHUGUNA, PROBABLY BECAUSE HE WOULD PROVIDE VIGOROUS LEADERSHIP AND THEREBY HELP THE IMAGE OF THE CONGRESS PARTY AS IT PREPARES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR THE ELECTION. FORMER CPI-ER AND CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY CHANDRAJIT YADAV HAS BEEN GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR WATCHING BAHUGUNA. BAHUGUNA'S CABINET INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINORITY GROUPS WHOSE SUPPORT THE CONGRESS PARTY NEEDS: SCHEDULED TRIBES, HARIJANS AND MUSLIMS. IT ALSO CONTAINS THREE LEADERS WHO HAVE OPPOSED BAHUGUNA IN THE PAST. (BAHUGUNA HAS ALSO WELCOMED CPI SUPPORT.) TRIPATHI HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO NEW DELHI AS MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION AND SHIPPING (SEPTIL).

3. COMMENT: THE MANEUVERINGS OVER THE UP GOVERNMENT IN PARTICULAR HAVE BEEN EXCRUCIATINGLY INVOLVED AND UNDERLINE MRS GANDHI'S CYNICISM IN HAVING DECLARED PRESIDENT'S RULE IN THE STATE IN THE FIRST PLACE LAST MAY. BOTH RAJASTHAN AND UP NOW HAVE STRONG CHIEF MINISTERS WITH FIRM POWER BASES INSIDE THE STATES. THE MAIN FOCUS OF MRS. GANDHI'S ATTENTION IN THE COMING MONTHS WILL CONTINUE TO BE UP WHERE IN AN ELECTORAL VICTORY FOR HER CONGRESS IS ESSENTIAL TO HER IMAGE AND INFLUENCE.
MOYNIHAN

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